



News From

Maggie Brooks

MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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BROOKS CALLS ON CITIZENS TO ASSIST WITH LOCAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

*Volunteers Encouraged to Join Community Emergency Response Teams,
\$50,000 Federal Grant Supports Program*

Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks appealed to local residents when she sounded a "call to service," asking them to help with efforts to protect our community and enhance emergency preparedness. At a press conference held at the Public Safety Training Facility (PSTF), 1190 Scottville Road, Brooks outlined the mission of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and asked for local volunteer support.

"In the post 9-11 world, Americans must be willing to capture the spirit of selflessness and commit to playing an active part in homeland security," said Brooks. "Patriotism requires more than lip service; it is not a spectator sport. Vigilance and participation are the key ingredients to the maintenance of any free and civil society. That is why I urge citizens to join our Community Emergency Response Teams."

The mission of the program is to make the community safer, stronger and better prepared to respond to threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds through education, training and coordinated volunteer service.

President George W. Bush created the national Citizen Corps initiative in 2002 under the umbrella of USA Freedom Corps. The Community of Monroe Citizen Corps (CMCC) was established locally following the area's April 2003 ice storm. Its programs include the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), which trains citizen as responders in the case of a disaster.

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The goal of the CERT program is to train residents of towns and neighborhoods in basic emergency response skills. Participants will receive 24 hours of training in: disaster preparedness, disaster fire suppression, disaster medical operations (Part I & Part II), light search and rescue, CPR and AED, disaster psychology and team organization.

Free training for volunteers will take place at the PSTF every Wednesday, from June 30 through August 18 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Interested volunteers should call (585) 234-2662 and leave a message expressing your interest and contact information.

“We can only be a safe nation when each of us is prepared to assist,” said MCC President Thomas Flynn. “This CERT program is a step toward becoming a safer nation and a good example of how the community college system can employ its expertise in education and its geographic reach to become the nation’s homeland security trainers of choice.”

The CERT training at the PSTF is being hosted by MCC’s new Homeland Security Management Institute and will be conducted in partnership by the County of Monroe, the Greater Rochester Chapter of the American Red Cross, and the Community of Monroe Citizen Corps – Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT).

“Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush called on American citizens to volunteer their time to help make our country safer. Today, I am calling on the citizens of Monroe County to give their time in service to our local community to help enhance our public safety and make our community more secure and better prepared,” said Brooks. “We want to make sure every citizen is ready to help themselves and their neighbors should an emergency occur.”

“In the case of an emergency that overwhelms or delays the community’s professional responders, trained CERT members can partner with the American Red Cross and give critical support, provide immediate assistance to victims, and organize volunteers at the site of the event,” said Becky McCorry, Director of Disaster Services for the Greater Rochester Chapter of the American Red Cross. “These skills can help save or sustain lives until additional help arrives.” McCorry also serves as Co-Chair of the local CMCC Council.

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CERT members can also help with non-emergency projects to improve community preparedness. In addition to CERT, other elements of the CMCC include a Neighborhood Watch Program (NWP) that includes terrorism awareness and education in the crime prevention mission; Volunteers in Police Services (VIPS) which utilizes civilian volunteers to assist law enforcement; and the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) which coordinates volunteer health professionals and others able to assist with public health needs during large-scale emergencies.

“After last year’s ice storm, the Northeast blackout, and any number of snow storms, fires and other emergency situations, Monroe County residents have always asked “How can I help?,” said Muffy Meisenzahl, Director of Monroe County’s Office of Emergency Preparedness and Co-Chair of the CMCC Council. “Now there is an answer – the Community of Monroe Citizen Corps. Much of the success of this program is due to the efforts of citizen volunteers like Chris Durkin, a key volunteer leader who has devoted hundreds of hours to designing and implementing the local CERT initiative.”

The addition of the Monroe County CERT program helps Citizen Corps nationally with its goal to double the number of CERT participants in the next two years, with over 400,000 individuals completing the 20 plus hours of training. Train-The-Trainer sessions will be held in all 50 states and six territories over the next year to expand the program throughout the country.

The CERT concept was first developed and implemented in 1985 by the Los Angeles City Fire Department. CERT is about readiness, people helping people, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number. For more information about CERT and the Citizen Corps Programs, visit the national website at www.citizencorps.gov/programs.

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